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In Summary —

C.I.A. No. 2 A Technical Man

The earth rumbles when a top Central Intelligence Agency job switches hands, even if the agency's demeanor stays mostly the same.

President Reagan named an intelligence veteran, John McMahon, to succeed Adm. Bobby Inman as C.I.A. deputy director last week. The appointment was meant to mollify Congressional concerns about the agency's professionalism and, as such, is not expected to bring policy shifts.

Mr. McMahon is highly regarded as a manager and technician, but lacks the outside constituency needed to be an effective policy advocate. Given Adm. Inman's unusual bipartisan support in Congress, his successor will have big shoes to fill. Moreover, Adm. Inman told the American Newspapers Publishers Association last week that United States foreign intelligence is "marginally capable."

The Senate Committee on Intelligence has had a "troubled 18-month relationship" with the Administration over some of its C.I.A. appointments, observed committee member Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The forced resignation last year of Max Hugel as chief of covert operations fueled criticism of Director William Casey. With a debate about C.I.A. secrecy and domestic spying growing, the President and Mr. Casey quickly tapped the experienced, apolitical McMahon.

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